

THE PIRCHEI SHOSHANIM ROADMAP TO PRAYER PROJECT

The Roadmap to Prayer

Lesson 26

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Lesson

26

Krias HaTorah

On Shabbos afternoons and on Mondays and Thursdays mornings we read a small segment of the weekly *parsha* in *shul* when a *Minyan* is present. The entire *parsha* is then read on the following Shabbos morning.

The *Gabbai* says the version of *Ve'sigaleh Ve'seira'eh etc.* during the weekdays. This is a prayer that *Hashem* should send us *Mashiach* and the final redemption. On Shabbos the *Gabbai* does not say this prayer as it is included in the *bracha* of *Samcheinu* where we pray for the coming of *Eliyahu HaNavi* (Elijah the prophet) and *Mashiach*. Therefore on Shabbos, the *Gabbai* begins with a different introduction to the Torah Reading. Although we will learn that on a public fast we also read the *Haftorah* with its *brochos*, the *Gabbai* uses the usual *Ve'sigaleh Ve'seira'eh etc.* so not to confuse the regular weekday introduction to *Krias HaTorah*.

The Institution of Public Torah Readings

מקורות Background

Moshe Rabbeinu decreed that we read from the Torah publicly on each *Shabbos*. The *Gemara*² writes that in *Ma'arava* (The Land of Israel) they would complete an entire cycle of reading the entire Five Books of Moses every three years. Eventually, the custom changed so that they would complete an entire cycle of the *Chumash* once each year as we do nowadays. In order to accomplish this, some adjustments must be made to accommodate the fluctuations in the Hebrew calendar months and the occurrence of *Yomim Tovim* (festivals) that preempt the regular Torah portion of the week. E.g. some years the portions of *Tazria* and *Metzora* are read on the same Shabbos, while on others they are separate. There are certain times though that the reading in *Eretz Yisrael* is one week ahead, if for example, the seventh day of *Pesach*

¹ *Orzar Ta'amei Haminbagim* page 221

² *Megillah* 29b

(Passover) is on a Friday, which concludes the holiday in *Eretz Yisrael* while in the Diaspora it is still *Yom Tov*. Thus, in *Eretz Yisrael* they read the regular Torah portion on the next day which is Shabbos, while in the Diaspora it is still *Yom Tov* and the *Yom Tov* reading preempts the regular Torah portion. This discrepancy is reconciled later in the year when the Diaspora doubles up and reads two *parshiyos* (Torah portions) while in *Eretz Yisrael* they read just one. However, this is not necessarily done immediately on the following week after *Yom Tov*.

The *Gemara* in *Baba Kama* writes that *Ezra Hasofer* (the scribe) instituted ten different statutes upon entering the Land of Israel after the Babylonian exile. One of these was the institution of Public Torah Readings. He instituted that they should read from the Torah with a *Minyan* on *Shabbos* by *Mincha*, and on Mondays and Thursdays. The *Gemara* questioned this saying that this decree of Publicly reading the Torah was already in place a long time before him; when the Jews were still in the *Midbar* (desert) with *Moshe Rabbeinu*. The *Gemara* answers that originally the *Decree* was to read the Torah on Mondays and Thursdays, while *Ezra* added an additional Torah Reading to include *Mincha* on *Shabbos*. He also instituted that *Aliyas* be allotted to 3 individuals and that each individual should read a minimum 3 verses (*Pesukim*) and the total verses from the 3 *Aliyas* be no less than 10 verses (*Pesukim*).

The Symbolism of 3 and 10

The *Gemara* in *Megillah* gives numerous opinions why *Krias HaTorah* requires a minimum 3 *Aliyas* and 10 *pesukim*. The number 3 represents, *Torah*, *Nevi'im* and *Kesuvim* or the 3 segments of the Jewish Nation, *Kohen*, *Levi* and *Yisrael*.

The number 10 is symbolic of the requisite of a community to support 10 people to be available every day for the daily prayer services. This so that *Hashem* should not be angered when there is a *shul* that cannot bring together a *Minyan* of men for prayer services as is discussed in the *Gemara Berachos daf 6b*. There are a number of

³ Perhaps because travel between the Diaspora did not occur so frequently

⁴ *Baba Kama* 82a

⁵ Five Books of Moses - the *Chumash*

⁶ The Books of Prophets

⁷ Scriptures

other things that the *Gemara* mentions that are represented by the number 10. *Hashem* gave us the Torah at Mount Sinai by speaking the *Aseres Hadibros* (10 Commandments). *Hashem* spoke 10 utterances when He created the world. There are 10 expressions of praise used by *Dovid Hamelech* throughout *Tehillim*.

The minimum of 10 *pesukim* which are required for *Krias HaTorah* can be divided amongst the 3 *Aliyas* either 4-3-3, 3-4-3 or 3-3-4. The *Gemara* mentions there is merit for each of these arrangements. However, more than the minimum amount of verses (*Pesukim*) are usually read for *Krias HaTorah*.

SILENCE

Remaining Silent AND Listening to Every Word

It is necessary to remain silent during the Torah Reading and as long as the scroll is open. The *Magen Avraham*⁸ writes that one is prohibited to speak from the time the first *Aliyah* begins reading from the Torah. This is according to the view of the Rambam. However, the majority of the *Poskim* (authorities on Jewish law) rule that the prohibition to speak begins as soon as the *Sefer Torah* is opened for the reading. However, according to strict law, one may have been permitted to converse between *Aliyas* except that we are concerned that one may continue to converse when *Krias HaTorah* resumes and that there may not be 10 people listening. Nevertheless, the *Mishna Berurah* concludes that one shouldn't converse between *Aliyas* even for *Divrei Torah*; except that one may be lenient with reciting *Shnayim Mikerab ve'echad Targum*⁹ or with Rashi's commentary, during the interval.

In fact, there is much debate whether one may involve himself in reciting *Shnayim Mikerab ve'echad Targum* during *Krias HaTorah* itself. Some allow it while others forbid it, since one cannot hear the *Ba'al Koreh* reading the *Parsha* (Torah portion).

⁸ מגן אברהם סימן קמו ס"ק ג, כיון שהתחיל - זהו דעת הרמב"ם ופשט הגמ' והפוסקים משמע דמשנפתח ס"ת אסור וב"ח פסק דבין גברא לגברא מותר ובפרט האידינא שמאריכין במי שבידך: משנה ברורה סימן קמו ס"ק טו, ראוי למדקדק בדבריו - ופר"ח כתב דמעיקר הדין הוא שאסור לעסוק בשום דבר ואפילו בשמ"ת בשעת הקריאה ואפ"ל איכא עשרה דצייתי זולתו וכן הביא מ"א בשם של"ה שמחמיר בזה אלא צריך לשתוק ולשמוע הקריאה מפי הש"ץ וכן דעת הגר"א במעשה רב [ומ"מ לקרות שמ"ת או עם פירש"י בין גברא לגברא מותר אפילו לדעה זו] והמ"א הביא בשם מטה משה דנכון לקרות בלחש מלה במלה עם הש"ץ דבלא זה א"א לכיון ולשמוע וכ"כ כמה אחרונים:

⁹ *Simon* 146:15

¹⁰ Lit. Twice *Chumash* and once *Targum*. This is a Rabbinic *mišva* to read the *parsha* each week in the above manner, familiarizing oneself with the verses (*Pesukim*) and its translation and meaning through studying the *Targum* that elucidates the text of *Chumash*.

The crux of this issue is clarified in the following paragraphs¹¹:

Listening to Krias HaTorah

There are two basic opinions among the early *Poskim* concerning the nature of the obligation of *Krias HaTorah* on Shabbos morning. One opinion holds that every adult male is obligated to listen to the weekly *parsha* read every Shabbos morning from a kosher *Sefer Torah*. He must pay attention to every word being read, or he will not fulfill his obligation¹². The second opinion¹³ maintains that the obligation of *Krias HaTorah* is incumbent upon the congregation as a whole. In other words, if ten or more people are together on Shabbos morning, they must read from the weekly *parsha*. While each member of the congregation is included in this congregational obligation, it is not a specific obligation upon each individual, provided that there are ten people who are paying attention.

Learning during Krias HaTorah

The *Shulchan Aruch* does not give a clear, definitive ruling concerning this dispute. Indeed, while discussing the laws regarding the permissibility of learning during *Krias HaTorah*, he quotes both opinions without rendering a decision. Instead, he concludes that “it is proper for a meticulous person to focus on and pay attention to the words of the reader”. This indicates that the *Shulchan Aruch* maintains like many other prominent *Poskim* that while it is commendable to be stringent, it is not absolutely essential.

The *Mishna Berura*¹⁴, though, quotes several *Poskim* who maintain that *Halacha* requires that each individual listen to every word of *Krias HaTorah*. Rav Moshe Feinstein זצ”ל¹⁵ rules that even *b’dieved/post facto*, one does not fulfill his

STRINGENT
BUT NOT
ESSENTIAL

¹¹ The Weekly *Halacha* Discussion, Rav Doniel Neustadt *sblit”a*

¹² *Shibalei HaLeket* 39, quoted in *Beis Yosef Orach Chaim Simon* 146. This also seems to be the view of the *Magen Avraham* 146:5 quoting *Shelach* and *Mateh Moshe*. See also *Ma’asei Rav* 131. See, however, *Penulas Sachir* on *Ma’asei Rav* 175.

¹³ Among the *Rishonim* see Ramban and Ran, *Megillah* 5a. Among the *poskim* see *Ginas Veradim* 2:21; *Imrei Yosher* 2:171; *Binyan Shlomo* 35; *Levushei Mordechai* 2:99 and others. See also *Yabia Omer* 4:31-3 and 7:9.

¹⁴ 146:15, There are conflicting indications as to what, exactly, is the view of the *Mishna Berura* on this issue; see *Biur Halacha* 135:14 (*D”b ein*) and 146:2 (*D”b v’hanachon*).

¹⁵ *Iggros Moshe Orach Chaim* 4:23; 4:40-4-5. If ten or more people missed a section of the Torah reading, then they should take out the sefer after davening and read that section over; *ibid*.

obligation if he misses a word and he must find a way to make up what he missed. There are, however, a host of Rabbinical Authorities (*Poskim*) who maintain that *Krias HaTorah* is a congregational obligation and not an individual's.

LISTEN TO
EVERY WORD

After all is said and done, it is still commendable that one should listen to every word of *Krias HaTorah* even if there are 10 others listening. The *Magen Avraham* suggests that one should read along quietly from a *Chumash* together with the *Ba'al Koreh* (Torah Reader) so that one can easily follow along without losing the place and missing any part of the *Kriah* (reading).

Amount of People Called for Aliyos

The *Mishna* in *Megillah*¹⁶ teaches that on *Shabbos* by *Mincha*, and on Mondays and Thursdays during the week, we read the weekly Torah-portion (*Parsha*) from a Torah scroll (*Sefer Torah*) whenever we have at least a *Minyan* of men present. Three people are called to the Torah (*Aliyah*) and each one reads a minimum of at least three *pesukim* each. The total number of verses (*Pesukim*) must be at least ten.

☞ On a weekday - 3

☞ On a fast day - 3

☞ On Purim or *Chanukah* - 3

☞ On Rosh Chodesh - 4

☞ On Yom Tov - 5

☞ On Yom Kippur - 6

☞ On **Shabbos** – 7 (more *Aliyas* may be added and it is completed by the *Maftir Aliyah* which repeats the final *pesukim* of the Torah portion (*Parsha*))

On Yom Tov and Yom Kippur and every other Torah Reading day, additional *Aliyas* are not given so to keep to the specific number allotted for that day.

Whenever there is an overlap of these special days e.g. *Shabbos* and *Yom Kippur*, the greater amount of *Aliyas* are required. Therefore, *Shabbos Yom Kippur* has 7 *Aliyas* instead of just 6.

¹⁶ *Daf*21a

Birchos HaTorah for Krias HaTorah

The *Gemara*¹⁷ relates that originally the blessings (*brochos*) recited for the Torah Reading (*Krias HaTorah*) consisted of just one *bracha* at the beginning before the first *Aliyah* and a closing *bracha* at the very end after the final *Aliyah*. That way, the entire Torah Reading was covered by one single *bracha* at the beginning of *Krias HaTorah* and it was closed with a single *bracha* at the very end of *Krias HaTorah*, similar to the format of *Pesukei De'zimra* and *Hallel*. The *Gemara* was then concerned that since people commonly didn't stay for the entire Torah Reading (*Krias HaTorah*¹⁸) they could mistakenly think that one doesn't need any *bracha* for *Krias HaTorah* or perhaps just an opening or just a closing *bracha* was sufficient. They therefore instituted that each individual should recite both an opening and a closing *bracha*.

Order of Aliyas

Amongst Jews, there are three groupings according to our lineage with regard to various laws. They are those who belong to the group of *Kobanim*, direct descendents from *Aharon HaKohen* and his sons specifically from the paternal lineage. Then there are *Levi'im* and *Yisraelim*. *Levi'im* are descendents of the tribe (*Shevet*) of *Levi*, from a paternal lineage. Anyone else falls into the third grouping of *Yisraelim*¹⁹.

¹⁷ *Megillah* 21b

¹⁸ We will discuss later the prohibition regarding leaving the shul once the Torah Reading has already begun

¹⁹ It is also possible for a *Kohen* to defile his descendents causing them to be considered regular *Yisraelim* when he marries a woman that the Torah forbids him to have relations with. Such a *Kohen* is also referred to as a *challal* (defiled).

A guest visiting a synagogue (shul) was quite puzzled by the seeming randomness by which the gabbai distributed the Aliyas. The gabbai called an esteemed Kohen to the Torah followed by a boy barely past Bar Mitzvah for Levi. He gave the next Aliyah to a simple man seated in the back row. The puzzled guest expressed his bewilderment to the gabbai.

The gabbai said "Our shul has a highly structured system to ensure the fair distribution of Aliyas. How do you expect to understand our system on your first visit here?"

Likewise, says the Chafetz Chayim, compared to the length of eternity and the complexities of cause and effect throughout time and history, our view of world events is as narrow our guest in shul.

Based on these groups, our Sages instructed that we divide the *Aliyas* amongst these groups according to a specific order. The highest level of importance is the *Kohen*, then the *Levi*, and then any *Yisrae*²⁰. The *Gemara* in *Gittin*²¹ teaches that the *Kohen* receives the first *Aliyah* because the Torah commands that we honor the *Kohen* in all matters. Then the *Gemara* proves that the *Levi* follows the *Kohen* in levels of importance. Because of this the order of the *Aliyas* is: first *Kohen*, then *Levi* and then *Yisrae*²². The *Gemara* in *Gittin* teaches that the importance of establishing this order was also to avoid conflict and strife when apportioning the *Aliyas* to the members

of the congregation. For this reason the individuals involved should not forgo their honors in this area of *Aliyas* as that will just disrupt the order and lead to more harm than good²³. Otherwise, even a *Kohen* who deserves honor according to Torah law can forgo his honor in other areas if he wishes to pass it on to his *Rebbe* (Torah teacher) or someone more erudite in Torah knowledge²⁴.

If there's no *Kohen* to take the first *Aliyah* then the first *Aliyah* can go either to a *Levi* or to a *Yisrael*. If a *Yisrael* receives the first *Aliyah* then the next *Aliyah* does not go

²⁰ This hierarchy applies to various *Halachos* (laws) such as redeeming from captivity and lending money, to name a few.

²¹ *Daf* 59a, b

²² On days where there are more than 3 *Aliyas*, the remaining *Aliyas* go exclusively to *Yisraelim*. Except on Shabbos or Yom Tov when there may be an additional *Aliyah* or two added where the final *Aliyah* that completes the Torah portion of the day may go to a *Kohen*, *Levi* or *Yisrael*. This also applies to the *Aliyah* for *Maftir* when it is an additional *Aliyah* to the required minimum (excluding a Fast-Day when *Maftir* is from the required minimum *Aliyas*).

²³ *Simon* 135:3

²⁴ See *Mishna Berura* 135:9

to a *Levi*. However, one should preferably give the first *Aliyah* to the *Yisrael* instead of the *Levi* if he is a more erudite Torah scholar than the *Levi*²⁵.

If there is no *Levi* in *shul* then the first two *Aliyas* go to the same *Kohen*. The same *Kohen* receives both *Aliyas* and he also recites both sets of brochos like any other person receiving an individual *Aliyah*.

NO LEVI'IM
PRESENT

In the latter case, we specifically do not give the second *Aliyah* to another *Kohen* since that may cause people to think that perhaps we found a problem with the first *Kohen's* validity, which will cast aspersions on him that he may be defiled (*Challah*)²⁶. We also do not give the second *Aliyah* to a *Yisrael* because then one can mistakenly think that he is a *Levi*. Rather we give it to the same *Kohen* even though he will repeat the same blessings. The reason this doesn't concern us is that the *Kohen* who gets two *Aliyas* will have to recite a second set of *brochos*, since the *brochos* are essentially for the sake of the people who drop into *shul* late or leave *shul* early.

Likewise, in the former case where there is no *Kohen* in *shul* we may give the first *Aliyah* to a *Levi* but not the second *Aliyah*, since by giving it to another *Levi* it will give the impression that perhaps the first *Aliyah* went to a *Kohen*. We also would rather not give it the same *Levi* if it is possible to avoid his repeating the *brochos* by giving the next *Aliyah* to a *Yisrael* and by doing so, it doesn't cast aspersions on the *Levi* that received the first *Aliyah*.

Minimum Requisites for Krias HaTorah

In order to become obligated to recite *Krias HaTorah*, there must be at least a *Minyan* of people who will be listening (similar to *Kaddish*).

If 10 people davened separately, they may convene for *Krias HaTorah*. Even if just 6 of them did not yet hear *Krias HaTorah*, they may convene for *Krias HaTorah*. There are some opinions that maintain that the minimum requirement is just 3 out of ten who did not yet hear *Krias HaTorah* on weekdays when there are just 3 *Aliyas* or on Rosh Chodesh or *Chol HaMo'ed* where there are 4 *Aliyas*, the minimum is 4, etc. Nevertheless, anyone of the 10 may be called for an *Aliyah*.

²⁵ *Mishna Berura* Simon 135:24

²⁶ See footnote 18

The Proper Way to take an Aliyah²⁷

The person being called should take the shortest possible route to the *Bimah* to avoid unnecessary delay. If all of the routes are equal in distance, he should ascend from the right-hand side similar to the route the *Sefer Torah* takes from the *Aron Kodesh* to the *Bimah*.

FIRST LOOK
INSIDE

Before reciting the *brochos*, the *Oleh* (one who takes the *Aliyah*) should look inside the Torah to see where the *Ba'al Koreh* will begin reading. The custom is to take one's *Tallis* or the belt of the *Sefer Torah* and touch it to the spot where they will be reading from and kiss it before reciting *Borchu*. Then one rolls up the scroll and recites the *brochos*. The Rama writes that one leaves the *Sefer Torah* open to its place and instead turns their head to the left side away from the *Sefer Torah* so people shouldn't think that the *brochos* are written in the *Sefer Torah* itself. Others argue that this method is not so preferred, since by doing so, one shows that he's not interested in reading from the *Sefer Torah* that is right before him. Alternatively, one may leave the scroll unrolled and recite the *brochos* with one's eyes shut or staring ahead. One that does not know the *brochos* by heart should read them from a Siddur or from a printed card that may be placed on the *Bimah* without a problem.

The Birchos HaTorah

Before the *Aliyah* one recites *Borchu es Hashem hamevorach*. The congregation responds as they normally respond to *Borchu*. The *Oleh* then recites the *bracha* of *Asher bachar banu etc.* and must stand for the *brochos* as well as for his *Aliyah*.

It is imperative that the *Oleh* recite *Borchu* out loud since it is a *Davar She'bikdusha* (a matter of sanctification) that requires that it be said with the participation of a *Minyan* of adult men.

The reason one recites *Borchu* before an *Aliyah* is in order to get the attention of the *Tzibbur* (congregation) so that they will all follow along and listen to the Torah Reading. This is done also before *Birchas Yotzeir Ohr* and again at *Ma'ariv* since the custom used to be that everyone listened to the *Chazzan* and was *yotzei* (fulfilled) their obligation by listening. Since they are all lengthy, *Borchu* is recited to make sure everyone is focused on the reading and is listening attentively. Accordingly, it is obvious that *Borchu* must be said out loud for everyone to hear²⁸.

²⁷ See *Orach Chaim Simon* 139 with its commentaries for the *Halachos* mentioned in this section

²⁸ See *Piskei Teshuvos* 139:12 and footnote 67

If one did not say it loud enough for a *Minyan* to hear it, he must repeat it loud enough for a *Minyan* to hear. If one is unable to raise his voice loud enough, one should make sure that there are another 9 individuals gathered around the *Bimah* to hear him. Otherwise, it is recommended that the *Gabbai* refrain from giving this individual an *Aliyah*. One may want to substitute it by giving the individual some other honor such as taking the *Sefer Torah* out of the *Aron Kodesh*, or honoring the individual with *Hagbabab* or *Gelilah*. If one must give this individual an *Aliyah*, if it is Shabbos, it is better to give him an *Aliyah* after the first 7 require *Aliyas*.

There is a discussion amongst the *Poskim* regarding the *Birchos HaTorah* if 10 people didn't hear his *brochos*, if they too must be repeated. The *Bivur Halacha* concludes that although according to strict *Halacha* one should not repeat these *brochos*, still, reciting them quietly defeats the whole purpose why we recite them in the first place. The explanation is as follows.

Birchos HaTorah for an Aliyah

What is the *Halacha* if someone was called for an *Aliyah* before reciting the *Birchos HaTorah* *for himself*? What is the *Halacha* after receiving the *Aliyah*? Does one repeat the *brochos* or not?

The *Shulchan Aruch*²⁹ rules that one who already recited *Birchos HaTorah* for himself should nevertheless recite it again when called for an *Aliyah* even if he was called just after saying his own *Birchos HaTorah*. The *Mechaber* explains the reason for this is because the *brochos* are for *the honor of the Torah*. It is recommended that one should at least recite a *pasuk* of Torah³⁰ on his way to the *Bimah* for the *Aliyah*.

One who did not yet recite *Birchos HaTorah* should recite the *Birchos HaTorah* as usual for the *Aliyah* but afterwards he does not repeat the *bracha* of *Asher bachar banu etc.* since it is redundant, even though it is out of order. Only the other two *brochos*³¹ are recited afterwards³².

²⁹ 139:8

³⁰ E.g. *Yevarechecha Hashem ve'yishmerecha etc.* which is what is usually recited after *Birchos HaTorah*.

³¹ *Asher kidshanu la'asok* and *Ve'baarev nah*

³² 139:9

Getting Back to the Issue

Now that we understand the nature of *Birchos HaTorah* is mainly for *the honor of the Torah*, it is clear that one who recites the *brochos* so quietly that a *minyan* of people can't hear him, is not affording the Torah any honor.

Another simple reason could be, since nowadays each individual recites a *bracha* both before and after his *Aliyah*, which as explained earlier is only for the latecomers or those who leave *shul* early to understand that *Krias HaTorah* requires *brochos*, saying it in a way that no one can hear doesn't accomplish anything for the people it was intended for.

Standing for Krias HaTorah

The custom regarding standing for *Krias HaTorah* varies from *shul* to *shul*. In some *shuls* most of the congregants remain seated during *Krias HaTorah*; in others, everyone stands.

There is a *machlokes* (dispute) in Shulchan Aruch³³ about this *Halacha*. The **Mechaber** rules that one is not *Halachically* required to stand during *Krias HaTorah*. The **Rama** adds, however, that there are those who are scrupulous to stand - as did the *Maharam*. The *Mishna Berura*³⁴ brings that the *Pri Chadash* and the *Gra* rule like the **Mechaber** and that this is the prevalent custom. Still, the *Bach* contends that one should stand anyway during *Krias HaTorah* to remind oneself of the receiving of the Torah (*Matan Torah*), at which time everyone stood and listened to *Hashem* and *Moshe Rabbeinu* speaking the *Asseres Hadibros* (the 10 Commandments). The *Maharam* himself perhaps stood during *Krias HaTorah* only for this reason. There are however, those who hold that even from a *Halachic* viewpoint one should stand for *Krias HaTorah*³⁵.

The *minhag* of the *Ari zt"l* was to sit throughout the entire *Krias HaTorah*. Others are scrupulous to sit and listen intently following the opinion of the *Ari zt"l*. During *Borchu* and the congregation's response to *Borchu*, the *Mishna Berura*³⁶ says that even the *Shulchan Aruch* agrees that one must stand. The *Kaf*

³³ Simon 146:4

³⁴ Ibid. s"t 19

³⁵ See *Kaf HaChaim* 146:20.

³⁶ 146:18

HaChaim (ibid), however, says that based on the *Ari zt"l* the *Sephardic* custom is to remain seated throughout the *brochos and the reading (Kriah)*.

מקורות Background

The basis for the ruling of the *Shulchan Aruch* is an episode in *Tanach*, which relates that on the first *Rosh Hashanah* after the wall of *Yerushalayim* was rebuilt by the Jews returning from their Babylonian exile, all the people gathered to hear the prophet Ezra read from the Torah³⁷.

The verse states that as Ezra opened the scroll before the eyes of the people, reading from a platform, all the people stood. The *Gemara*³⁸, however, states that in this context, “standing” signifies being silent - as it does elsewhere in *Tanach*. It is clear from the *Gemara* that the reading of the Torah mandates only silent attention, not actual literal standing.

The *Ralbag*, however, understands that they actually did stand up, if only in order to pay attention and better understand what was being read³⁹. The *Ibn Ezra*⁴⁰ also states that (although the *Gemara* explains that the people “stood silent”), it is possible that they actually stood out of respect for the Torah as was the common practice to stand in those days while learning⁴¹. This could be the basis for the stringency of the *Maharam*.

הלכות Laws

Both the Designated Reader and the *Oleh* must be standing throughout the *Aliyas*. They should not lean on something because leaning is not really considered standing. Additionally, one is prohibited to lean on the *Bimah* when the *Sefer Torah* is

³⁷ *Nehemia* 8:5

³⁸ *Sotah* 39a

³⁹ *Nehemia* ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid

⁴¹ See *Megillah* 21a

placed on the *Bimah* unless the tablecloth under the *Sefer Torah* is removed so that one is only leaning on the table⁴².

Some individuals bow during the *brochos*. Those who do this should do so only somewhere in the middle of the *brochos*, not at its beginning or end since that is done only in the designated portions of *Shemoneh Esrei*. The reason for this custom is to show reverence for the Torah. One who cannot see the words of the *Sefer Torah* because they are too high up, may lean on the *Bimah* in order to see the portion that is read for his *Aliyah*. One must be careful though to stop leaning once the reader reaches the lower part of the column that he can see without leaning.

Some people also have a custom to lift the poles of the *Sefer Torah* scroll and shake them a little during the *brochos*.

Between *Aliyas*, *Sephardim* cover the *Sefer Torah* with a cover. The custom of *Ashkenazim* and of *Nusach Sefard* is to roll the *Sefer Torah* closed⁴³. In truth, one need not cover it if it is rolled closed unless there is an extended break in the *Kriah* (reading) as when the *Gabbai* recites the *Mi shebeirach*⁴⁴ *Avoseinu ... Hu yevareich ...* (He Who blessed our forefathers... He should bless...)⁴⁵.

After the reading is completed for each *Aliyah*, the sefer is first rolled closed and the final blessing is recited. The final blessing should not be recited over an open *Sefer Torah* even if one keeps his eyes closed.

The Torah reader (*Ba'al Koreh*) recites *Chatzzi Kaddish* after the reading (*Kriah*) is completed with the 3 *Aliyas* of weekdays. For this *Kaddish* the *Sefer Torah* is closed and covered even according to *Sephardic* custom.

Hagbahah

As mentioned earlier on, According to many *minbagim* (customs) *Hagbahah* is performed before *Krias HaTorah*. The entire congregation would gaze at its writing

⁴² *Simon* 141:1 and *Mishna Berura*

⁴³ Most likely the different customs are to the physical differences between a *Sephardic Sefer Torah* and an *Ashkenazic one*.

⁴⁴ *Mi Shebeirach Avoseinu etc. Hu yevareich etc.* is a blessing for the *Oleh* and other individuals the *Oleh* wishes to honor by including them by name, in the blessing.

⁴⁵ *Simon* 139:4, 5

and it is considered a special occasion for receiving *Divine* inspiration. Apparently, people considered this to be so special that they considered these moments as the main feature of *Krias HaTorah* and many people would leave *shul* as soon as *Hagbahab* was done. Seeing the need to keep people in *shul* for the Torah Reading (*Krias HaTorah*) itself, some communities adapted the *minbag* (custom) of delaying *Hagbahab* until after the Torah Reading (*Krias HaTorah*)⁴⁶.

Where to Begin and Where to End an Aliyah

One must not end an *Aliyah* less than three verses (*Pesukim*) away from the end of a Torah paragraph. Also one should not end an *Aliyah* only two verses (*Pesukim*) into a new paragraph. In some segments of the Torah this can become a little tricky, as we will explain by the Torah Reading for Rosh Chodesh.

Those who come at the beginning of *Krias HaTorah* can err if they see the first *Aliyah* ending with just 2 verses (*Pesukim*) until the end of the paragraph. This can give the impression to someone leaving at this point that the next *Aliyah* will be just those 2 *pesukim*. Likewise, someone who comes in after an *Aliyah* that ends 2 *pesukim* into a paragraph may think that the previous *Aliyah* was just those 2 *pesukim* into the paragraph, which is less than the minimum requirement of at least 3 verses (*Pesukim*). By instituting the above-mentioned minimum requirements, all these issues are precluded.

One common example that demonstrates the issue of not reading only 2 *pesukim* into a Torah portion or leaving just 2 *pesukim* before its end is the *Rosh Chodesh* reading. It has the following configuration that needs to be apportioned to four *Aliyas*: 8 *pesukim*, 2 *pesukim* and 5 *pesukim*.

ROSH
CHODESH

Paragraph 1

1 וַיְדַבֵּר הַשֵּׁם אֶל מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר:
2 צֹו אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם. אֶת קִרְבְּנֵי לְחָמֵי לְאִשֵּׁי רֵיחַ נִיחֹחַי. תִּשְׁמְרוּ לְהִקְרִיב לִי
בְמוֹעֵדוֹ:
3 וְאָמַרְתָּ לָהֶם. זֶה הָאִשָּׁה אֲשֶׁר תִּקְרְבוּ לָהֶם. כְּבָשִׂים בְּגֵי שָׁנָה תַמְיָמִים. שְׁנַיִם לְיוֹם עֹלָה
תָּמִיד:
4 אֶת הַכֶּבֶשׂ אֶחָד תַּעֲשֶׂה בַבֶּקֶר. וְאֶת הַכֶּבֶשׂ הַשֵּׁנִי תַעֲשֶׂה בֵּין הָעֶרְבִים:
5 וְעִשִּׂירִית הָאִיפָה סֹלֶת לְמִנְחָה. בְּלוּלָה בְשֶׁמֶן כְּתִית רְבִיעֵת הֵהִיז:
6 עֹלֹת תָּמִיד תַּעֲשֶׂה בְהַר סִינַי. לְרֵיחַ נִיחֹחַ אִשָּׁה לַהֵשֶׁם:
7 וְנִסְכּוֹ רְבִיעֵת הֵהִיז לְכֶבֶשׂ הָאֶחָד. בְּקֹדֶשׁ הַסֵּךְ נִסְךְ שֶׁכֶר לַהֵשֶׁם:
8 וְאֶת הַכֶּבֶשׂ הַשֵּׁנִי תַעֲשֶׂה בֵּין הָעֶרְבִים. כְּמִנְחַת הַבֶּקֶר וְכִנְסֹו תַעֲשֶׂה. אִשָּׁה רֵיחַ נִיחֹחַ

⁴⁶ *Piskei Teshuvos* 134:9

להשם:

Paragraph 2

1 וּבָיִוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת שְׁנֵי כַּבְשִׁים בְּנֵי שָׁנָה תְּמִימִים, וְשְׁנֵי עֶשְׂרִינִים סֵלֶת מִנְחָה בְּלוּלָה בְּשֶׁמֶן וְנִסְכּוֹ:
2 עַל־לֶת שַׁבָּת בְּשַׁבְּתוֹ, עַל עֵלֶת הַתְּמִיד וְנִסְכָּה:

Paragraph 3

1 וּבְרֵאשֵׁי חֲדָשִׁיכֶם תִּקְרִיבוּ עֹלָה לַהֵשֶׁם, פָּרִים בְּנֵי בָקָר שְׁנַיִם וְאֵיל אֶחָד, כַּבְשִׁים בְּנֵי שָׁנָה
שִׁבְעָה תְּמִימִים:
2 וְשִׁלְשָׁה עֶשְׂרִינִים סֵלֶת מִנְחָה בְּלוּלָה בְּשֶׁמֶן לְפָר הָאֶחָד, וְשְׁנֵי עֶשְׂרִינִים סֵלֶת מִנְחָה בְּלוּלָה
בְּשֶׁמֶן לְאֵיל הָאֶחָד:
3 וְעֶשְׂרֵן עֶשְׂרֵן סֵלֶת מִנְחָה בְּלוּלָה בְּשֶׁמֶן לְכַבֵּשׁ הָאֶחָד, עֹלָה רֵיחַ נִיחַח אִשָּׁה לַהֵשֶׁם:
4 וְנִסְכֵיהֶם, חֲצִי הַהֵינִ יְהִיָּה לְפָר, וְשִׁלִּישַׁת הַהֵינִ לְאֵיל, וּרְבִיעֵת הַהֵינִ לְכַבֵּשׁ יִזֶּן, זֹאת עֵלֶת חֲדָשׁ
בְּחֲדָשׁוֹ לְחֲדָשֵׁי הַשָּׁנָה:
5 וְשֶׁעִיר עִזִּים אֶחָד לַחֲטָאת לַהֵשֶׁם, עַל עֵלֶת הַתְּמִיד יַעֲשֶׂה וְנִסְכּוֹ:

**THE
DIFFICULTY**

If the first paragraph is divided into two *Aliyas*, then the remaining 2 and 5 *pesukim* paragraphs cannot be divided properly for another two *Aliyas* according to the above rules. It would have to go all to one *Aliyah* leaving the fourth *Aliyah* out. The reason is because if the remaining *pesukim* are divided after the 2 *pesukim*, it is too few *pesukim* for an *Aliyah*. If one reads those 2 *pesukim* and then another 2, he cannot stop there because that is just 2 *pesukim* into the new paragraph. To read three *pesukim* into the final paragraph leaves only 2 *pesukim* until the end of the final paragraph which is also not allowed. So what can we do?

**THE
SOLUTION(S)**

This is the subject of a dispute between the *Gra* and others as to what is the best method of dividing the *Rosh Chodesh Aliyas*. The most common custom is not like the *Gra*. The first *Aliyah* reads the first three verses (*Pesukim*). After that we back up and repeat the third *pasuk* (*ve'amarta lahem ואמרת להם*) and read ahead another two verses (*Pesukim*) stopping with three verses (*Pesukim*) left to go in the first paragraph. The rest of the first paragraph, the next 2 are for the third *Aliyah* and the last 5 verse (*pasuk*) paragraph for the fourth and final *Aliyah*.

Kohen: Paragraph 1 *pesukim* 1, 2, 3

Levi: Paragraph 1 *pesukim* 3, 4, 5

Yisrael: Paragraph 1 *pesukim* 6, 7, 8, Paragraph 2 *pesukim* 1, 2

Yisrael: Paragraph 3 *pesukim* 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

According to the *Gra*, instead of backing up after the first *Aliyah* and repeating the third *pasuk* for the second *Aliyah*, he prefers reading the first 3 *pesukim* for the first *Aliyah*, the remaining 5 *pesukim* for the second *Aliyah*, then for the third *Aliyah* we back up 3 *pesukim* into the last paragraph and read the next 2 *pasuk* paragraph in full. The last *Aliyah* is the last 5 *pasuk* paragraph.

Kohen: Paragraph 1 *pesukim* 1, 2, 3

Levi: Paragraph 1 *pesukim* 4, 5, 6, 7, 8

Yisrael: Paragraph 1 *pesukim* 6, 7, 8, Paragraph 2 *pesukim* 1, 2.

Yisrael: Paragraph 3 *pesukim* 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

The reason the **Gra** prefers his way is because it avoids the mistake someone can make if he enters *shul* by the second *Aliyah* where they start back by the third verse *pasuk* (*ve'amarta labem ואמרת להם*) which gives the false impression that the first *Aliyah* was just 2 verses (*Pesukim*).

The total amount of verses *Pesukim* between all *Aliyas* should not be less than 10 all together. The only exception is on *Purim* day when we read the portion of *Va'yavoh Amalek ויבא עמלק* which consists of exactly 9 verses (*Pesukim*).

The Number of Torah Scrolls Taken from the Holy Ark

On any given day that there is *Krias HaTorah*, planning and care must be taken so that the right *Sefer Torah* is removed and also that the right number are removed. On a regular Monday, Thursday and *Shabbos* reading, the *Sefer Torah* which is rolled to the weekly portion is used. For *Rosh Chodesh* which is read from *parshas Pinchas* in *Sefer Bamidbar* one should take a different *Sefer Torah* that is already rolled to that place to avoid making everyone wait while it is rolled to the proper place. If there is only one *Sefer Torah* available, someone should prepare it in advance so not to inconvenience the congregation. On *Chanukah* we read the Torah portion in *Nasso* in *Sefer Bamidbar*. During *Chanukah* we always celebrate *Rosh Chodesh* as *Chanukah* spans from the 25th day of the Hebrew month of *Kislev* into the month of *Teves*. Sometimes *Rosh Chodesh* is just one day (the sixth day of *Chanukah*) and sometimes it is two days (the sixth and the seventh day of *Chanukah*). If these days are weekdays, then we take two *Sefer Torah's* out of the *Aron Kodesh* (Holy Ark) the first is used for 3 *Aliyas* of *Rosh Chodesh* and the 4th *Aliyah* is from the second *Sefer Torah* for *Chanukah*. If one of the *Rosh Chodesh* days falls on *Shabbos*, then 3 *Sefer Torahs* are removed; the first for the weekly portion for 6 *Aliyas*, the second is for *Rosh Chodesh*, 1 *Aliyah*, and the third for *Chanukah* the 8th *Aliyah*. The *chazzan* recites *Chatzitz Kaddish* between the 7th and 8th *Aliyas*.

THE
DOMINANT
READING

When there is conflict between two Torah portions that must be read, there are basic guidelines that decide which will be the dominant portion of the reading. The general rule is that whichever is holier or more common will take precedence.

For example, *Rosh Chodesh* on a Monday or Thursday, we read just from the *Rosh Chodesh* reading and it is not necessary then to read from the weekly torah-portion, since the main reason for the Monday and Thursday readings are just to not be three days without a Public Torah-reading.

When *Rosh Chodesh* is on *Shabbos*, the main reading is the portion of the week which gets 7 *Aliyas* while *Rosh Chodesh* gets just one. If *Rosh Chodesh* and *Chanukah* coincide during the week, *Rosh Chodesh* is the dominant reading since it is more common than *Chanukah*. Therefore we read 3 *Aliyas* from the *Rosh Chodesh* portion and 1 from the *Chanukah* reading.

Leaving Before the end of Krias HaTorah

One is not allowed to leave once the *Ba'al Koreh* has begun reading from the *Sefer Torah*. Anyone who has already heard *Krias HaTorah* may only leave between *Aliyas*. Even if one just enters into the synagogue (*shul*) to tell someone something without any intention of joining the congregation for *Krias HaTorah* or davening should also remain in *shul* for the entire *Krias HaTorah* if he has not yet heard it that day according to the opinion of the *Magen Avraham*⁴⁷. However, according to the *Kaf HaChaim* one who already heard *Krias HaTorah* or is planning to hear it later on does not have to stay inside for *Krias HaTorah*⁴⁸.

⁴⁷ *Tefilla Ke'Hilchasab* 16:41

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* footnote 98

Questions:

- 1) Which *Krias HaTorah* (Torah Readings) did *Moshe Rabbeinu* institute?
- 2) Which *Krias HaTorah* (Torah Readings) did *Ezra* institute?
- 3) What else did *Ezra* institute with regard to *Krias HaTorah* (Torah Readings)?
- 4) When is it absolutely necessary to remain quiet at *Krias HaTorah* time and what exception is there to this rule according to some opinions?
- 5) What are the 2 ways to define the obligation of *Krias HaTorah*?
- 6) How many are the least required *Aliyas* and how many are the most and when is that?
- 7) How was *Bircbos HaTorah* recited for *Krias HaTorah* originally and how is it done now? Why was it changed?
- 8) What is the order of *Aliyas* when there is no *Levi* present in the *Minyan*?
- 9) What is the minimum amount of people required for *Krias HaTorah*?
- 10) What must the *Ba'al Koreb* be careful with even when reading more than the minimum amount of *pesukim* required for an *Aliyah*?

Answers:

- 1) *Moshe Rabbeinu* instituted *Krias HaTorah* on Shabbos mornings, and on Mondays and Thursdays.
- 2) *Ezra* instituted to read an additional reading on Shabbos afternoon.
- 3) He instituted that there should be at least three *Aliyas* consisting of at least 3 *pesukim* (verses) each and combined 10 *pesukim* minimum.
- 4) When the *Sefer Torah* is open and the reading is in progress. According to one opinion one is allowed to recite *Shenayim Mikerab ve'Echad Targum*.
- 5) Either it is a obligation on each person to hear *Krias HaTorah* except that it can only be done with a *Minyan*. Alternatively, it is only a congregational obligation whenever there are ten men together who have not yet performed the *mitzvah*.
- 6) The least are 3 on a regular weekday. The most required *Aliyas* are 7 on Shabbos (excluding *Maftir*).
- 7) Originally, one *bracha* was said at the beginning of the first *Aliyah* and one *bracha* at the end of the last *Aliyah*. Since many people came late and others left early, they were left with the impression that *Krias HaTorah* doesn't require any *brochos* or at most only one *bracha*. Therefore, our Sages instituted that a *bracha* is recited by each *Aliyah* at its beginning and at its end so that everyone will see that Torah requires a *bracha*.
- 8) In such a case the same *Kohen* receives the first 2 *Aliyas* and he recites the *brochos* before and after each *Aliyah*.
- 9) The minimum is 10 adult men. Of these 10 men there are different opinions how many of them must not have fulfilled their obligation yet. Some say 6 and others say an amount equal to the minimum required *Aliyas* for that day's Torah Reading (E.g. 3 for a weekday, 4 for *Rosh Chodesh*).
- 10) The *Ba'al Koreh* must be careful not to end an *Aliyah* within the beginning or the end of a Torah paragraph.